

~~SECRET~~

THAI GOVERNMENT PARTY WINS NO MANDATE IN ELECTIONS

The government's failure to win a majority in the lower house elections on 10 February is embarrassing for the military leadership, but it will not result in any dramatic changes in the way Thailand is ruled.

The government's Saha Pracha Thai Party won only some 35 percent of the seats in the lower house. Independent candidates, many of whom have ties with the government party, took about 32 percent. The opposition Democratic Party won 26 percent, and the remainder went to splinter parties.

There were no major surprises in the voting. The government fared less well in isolated areas than had been anticipated, however, and two leading leftists were beaten in their northeast bailiwicks. The number of newcomers elected over well-known old-time politicians suggests that the sentiment for change among the electorate was fairly strong. The voting itself went smoothly, with no significant incidents or irregularities reported.

The government party's slim plurality presumably will provide enough justification for the present cabinet to be reconstituted, possibly with some minor changes, as the new gov-

ernment when parliament convenes next month.

The government should have little difficulty bringing into line enough independents to form a working majority in the lower house. Thailand's military-dominated leadership had made it clear, however, that it will resist opposition efforts to amend those sections of the constitution that severely limit the powers of the lower house. The senate, whose members are picked by the government, has virtual veto power over important legislation.

The election will, however, influence to some extent both the future policies and make-up of the military leadership. Although they will have to tread lightly, opposition elements for the first time in over ten years have a legitimate forum in which to express political dissent.

Without a clear mandate from the electorate, the country's leadership will be more solicitous of such views than they would have been otherwise. The government party's poor showing, particularly in Bangkok where it won no seats, may also aggravate factional disputes within the establishment. (~~SECRET~~)

~~SECRET~~